Dear faculty colleagues:

In the face of this past week’s unprecedented challenges, we are grateful for your efforts to meet the needs of our students. As President Mahoney has alerted the campus, we now expect to extend remote instruction to the end of the academic year. We know that it is very hard work. We have heard how frustrating it is to adapt carefully-crafted syllabi to unanticipated modalities, and to cancel learning experiences that were many months in the planning. Given the many stressors of this moment, we want to encourage you to extend understanding and patience to yourself and your students. This is not a time for getting everything right, but for trying our best and learning from our challenges—and for doing so in the humane spirit of acceptance that makes us who we are as a university community.

To support faculty during this challenging time, the Academic Senate is crafting resolutions calling for temporary changes to the Senate policies on the Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) and Retention, Tenure and Promotion (RTP). The purpose of these changes is to allow faculty, at their discretion, to withdraw their spring 2020 SETEs from consideration in personnel evaluations, and to authorize an optional seventh (7) probationary year for those faculty hired before the spring 2020 semester. It is our hope that these temporary changes to Senate policies will address some faculty concerns in light of the transition to remote instructional modalities and the impact of travel bans on scholarship, teaching and service.

We are fortunate to have the support of an excellent, faculty-directed team at CEETL (the Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching and Learning), who have developed new web resources to help you keep teaching by providing ongoing guidance and community. While it may not be possible to translate specific assignments into remote modalities, you may find inventive ways to help students achieve your most important learning outcomes—CEETL is just one resource to help in the process. Above all, do try to be as flexible as you can, and to remember that your students may be struggling with new ways of learning, exacerbated by the stress and uncertainty of this challenging time. To help them, the university’s new Tutoring and Academic Support Center (TASC) is offering tutoring and study support by Zoom.

As the university prepares for a more sustained period of remote instruction, it will also be scaling back staffing and service levels to meet new guidance from the Governor’s and Mayor’s Offices. To transition to this period, we are asking faculty to retrieve materials from their offices and prepare to close their labs and research facilities. All academic buildings will be open this week from 8-5, Tuesday through Thursday. Faculty who wish to access their offices after this time can call UPD dispatch. In addition, the library will be closed, with the exception of the Research Commons, which will allow limited student access to computers and technology.

Above all, please take the time to see to your own self-care and care for family members. This is a stressful time for everyone, and we must all be sure that we are protecting our health and well-being.

Best wishes,
Jennifer and Nancy

Jennifer Summit                                                                Nancy Gerber
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs       Chair, Academic Senate